

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) A grommet adapted to be inserted into an opening of a sheet member having opposite upper and lower surfaces, said grommet comprising:

a shank extending in an axial direction of said grommet and having opposite upper and lower ends;

at least a locking tab coupled to said shank between the upper and lower ends of said shank and radially flexible relative to said shank; and

a head connected to the upper end of said shank and comprising a flange adapted to engage the upper surface of the sheet member when said shank and said locking tab are snapped into the opening;

wherein said shank comprises

a shoulder in a region adjacent the head, said shoulder being adapted to be placed below an edge of the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction after being snapped into the opening, thereby preventing withdrawal of said shank from said opening; and

an outer surface section inclined relative to the axial direction and connecting said shoulder and the lower surface of said head, for engaging the edge of the opening and drawing said shank into the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction; and

wherein, when said shank is seen in said axial direction, said shoulder is confined between an outer edge of said shank and a first boundary line intersecting said outer edge at first and second points, and said outer surface section is confined between said first boundary line and a second

boundary line that intersects the outer edge of said shank at a third point, and a spacing between said first and second boundary lines decreases as the second boundary line extends from the third point toward the first point.

7. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, wherein the outer surface section is planar, and the shoulder is planar and perpendicular to the axial direction.

8. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, wherein said locking tab has a lower end directly connected to said shank and an upper end which is free of any direct attachment with said shank and is connected to said shank exclusively via the lower end of said locking tab.

9. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 6, wherein said shank has a rectangular cross section taken perpendicular to said axial direction, and the shoulder is located in a corner portion of said rectangular cross section, longitudinally extends toward an adjacent corner portion of said rectangular cross section, and has a width that decreases along said longitudinal extent.

10. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 8, wherein the region of said shank with said shoulder is less radially flexible than said locking tab.

11. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 6, wherein said outer surface section extends continuously, exclusively radially inwardly and upwardly from said shoulder all the way to the lower surface of said head.

12. (canceled)

13. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 6, wherein said first and second boundary lines converge at said first point.

14. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, wherein said shank has an approximately rectangular cross section, taken perpendicular to said axial direction in the region adjacent to said head, and said shoulder and said outer surface section are located within and in a corner portion of the approximately rectangular cross section.

15. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 14, wherein said locking tab projects radially outwardly from a middle of a side of the approximately rectangular cross section.

16. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 14, wherein said shank comprises at least two said shoulders and two said outer surface sections being located in two diagonally opposite corner portions of said shank.

17. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 16, wherein each of said shoulders and outer surface sections has an approximately triangular shape having a side which is not parallel with any side of the approximately rectangular cross section of said shank and which is defined by at least one of said first and second boundary lines.

18. (canceled)

19. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, wherein said shank and said head together define an axial bore adapted to receive and retain therein an elongated fastening element.

20. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, comprising a plurality of

said flexible locking tabs, wherein said shoulder is not part of any of said locking tabs.

21-27. (cancelled)

28. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 6, wherein said first and second boundary lines are straight lines.

29. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 28, wherein said first and second boundary lines converge toward each other and define therebetween an acute angle.

30. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 29, wherein said first boundary line and the outer edge of said shank define at said first point another acute angle.

31. **(currently amended)** A grommet adapted to be inserted into an opening of a sheet member having opposite upper and lower surfaces, said grommet comprising:

a shank extending in an axial direction of said grommet and having opposite upper and lower ends;

at least a locking tab coupled to said shank between the upper and lower ends of said shank and radially flexible relative to said shank; and

a head connected to the upper end of said shank and comprising a flange adapted to engage the upper surface of the sheet member when said shank and said locking tab are snapped into the opening;

wherein said shank comprises

a shoulder in a region adjacent the head, said shoulder being adapted to be placed below an edge of the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction after being snapped into the opening, thereby preventing withdrawal of said shank from said opening; and

an outer surface section inclined relative to the axial direction and connecting said shoulder

and the lower surface of said head, for engaging the edge of the opening and drawing said shank into the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction; and

wherein, when said shank is seen in said axial direction, said shoulder is confined between an outer edge of said shank and a first boundary line consisting of a straight line intersecting said outer edge at first and second points, and said outer surface section is confined between said first boundary line and a second boundary line;

the outer edge of said shank comprises first and second sections which are angled with respect to each other and intersect the first boundary line at said first and second points, respectively;

the second boundary line intersects the second section at a third point; and

a spacing between said first and second boundary lines decreases as the second boundary line extends from the third point toward the first point.

32. (previously presented) The grommet of claim 31, wherein
the outer edge of the shank further comprises a corner section located between and connecting said first and second sections; and
the third point is farther from the corner section than the second point.

33. (currently amended) The grommet of claim 32, wherein
said first and second sections ~~and said first and second boundary lines~~ are straight;
said second boundary line consists of a straight line;
said first section and said first and second boundary lines are slanted at acute angles relative to each other; and
the corner section is curved.

34. (currently amended) In combination,
a sheet member having opposite upper and lower surfaces and an opening connecting the upper and lower surfaces; and

~~a grommet as set forth in claim 31 plugged in said opening~~

a grommet inserted into said opening, said grommet comprising:

a shank extending in an axial direction of said grommet and having opposite upper and lower ends;

at least a locking tab coupled to said shank between the upper and lower ends of said shank and radially flexible relative to said shank; and

a head connected to the upper end of said shank and comprising a flange adapted to engage the upper surface of the sheet member when said shank and said locking tab are snapped into the opening;

wherein said shank comprises

a shoulder in a region adjacent the head, said shoulder being adapted to be placed below an edge of the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction after being snapped into the opening, thereby preventing withdrawal of said shank from said opening; and

an outer surface section inclined relative to the axial direction and connecting said shoulder and the lower surface of said head, for engaging the edge of the opening and drawing said shank into the opening when said shank is moved transversely to said axial direction; and

wherein, when said shank is seen in said axial direction, said shoulder is confined between an outer edge of said shank and a first boundary line consisting of a straight line intersecting said outer edge at first and second points, and said outer surface section is confined between said first boundary line and a second boundary line;

the outer edge of said shank comprises first and second sections which are angled with respect to each other and intersect the first boundary line at said first and second points, respectively;

the second boundary line intersects the second section at a third point; and

a spacing between said first and second boundary lines decreases as the second boundary line extends from the third point toward the first point.